

# **Transportation Conformity Working Group Interagency Consultation Meeting Summary**

**Tuesday, April 25, 2006  
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**Southern California Association of Governments  
818 W 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
Riverside 'A' Conference Room**

---

The following minutes are intended to **summarize** the matters discussed.  
**An audiocassette tape of the actual meeting is available for listening in SCAG's office.**

## **1.0 CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 AM by Jennifer Bergener, OCTA

## **2.0 WELCOME AND SELF-INTRODUCTIONS**

### **ATTENDANCE:**

#### **In Person:**

Sam Alaneddine, Caltrans  
AltaGrace Balmir, FHWA  
Jennifer Bergener, OCTA  
Kathryn Higgins, SCAQMD  
Jessica Kirchner, SCAG  
Julia Lester, Environ International Corp.  
Betty Mann, SCAG  
Laleh Modrek, Caltrans  
Jonathan Nadler, SCAG  
Sylvia Patsaouras, SCAG  
Lisa Poe, SANBAG  
Arnie Sherwood, SCAG  
Carla Walecka, TCA  
Dianna Watson, Caltrans District 07  
Frank Wen, SCAG  
Leann Williams, Caltrans District 07

#### **Via Teleconference:**

Mike Brady, Caltrans Headquarters  
Ben Cacatian, Ventura County APCD  
Paul Fagan, Caltrans District 08  
Ilene Gallo, Caltrans Headquarters  
Sandy Johnson, Caltrans District 11  
Ken Lobeck, RCTC  
Ted Matley, FTA Region 9  
Jean Mazur, FHWA  
Genie McGaugh, Ventura County APCD  
Rosanna Navarro-Brasington, Mojave AQMD  
Karina O'Connor, EPA Region 9  
Dennis Wade, ARB

### **3.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no public comments at this meeting.

### **4.0 CHAIR'S REPORT**

There was no Chair Report at this meeting.

### **5.0 ACTION ITEMS**

#### **5.1 Approval of the March 28, 2006 Meeting Summary**

Ken Lobeck, RCTC, requested clarification on agenda Item 6.1, Riverside County TCM Discussion, as to whether or not HOV ramp projects that were previously listed as TCM's could be reclassified in a one-time corrective action. EPA requested that RCTC provide a list of the eight interchange projects for further review. The group would then hear back from EPA on whether or not to reclassify the projects.

There were two typo's noted. In Item 5.1, Approval Meeting Summary, the word 'unanimously' was misspelled. In Item 6.4, second paragraph, the acronym should read RACM instead of RCAM.

MOTION was made to MOVE the Meeting Summary with minor adjustments not including the RCTC HOV Ramp Lane clarification which will be included in next month's Meeting Summary. MOTION was SECONDED and UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

### **6.0 INFORMATION ITEMS**

#### **6.1 Classification of Auxiliary Lanes Discussion**

Chairman Bergener initiated a discussion on auxiliary lanes to determine when such projects would or would not be considered as capacity enhancing.

According to Mr. Arnie Sherwood, SCAG, in the past, SCAG would determine if auxiliary lane projects connected links. If the project did not connect links, the model would not see it as a capacity enhancement.

Ms. AltaGrace Balmir, FHWA, stated that recent discussions have concluded that auxiliary lanes are not automatically exempt from conformity analysis and if a project crosses nodes it is going to be an issue.

Ms. Mazur, FHWA, concurred that auxiliary projects are not automatically considered exempt, and stated that a related question is whether or not the projects are regionally significant. If a project is regionally significant it must be explicitly modeled; if not, it can be otherwise accounted for in the emissions analysis. Ms. Mazur informed the group of past practice whereby a project less than a mile in length was not considered regionally significant but, since this was a "gentleman's agreement" and is not documented, the federal agencies have moved away from this definition. Ms. Mazur has been collecting definitions from other MPOs of what is considered regionally significant and what is considered a significant change in design concept and scope. Ms. Mazur said she would share these definitions with the group to help us define locally whether or not a project is considered regionally significant with the caveat that some of the MPO definitions are not yet finalized and are considered draft.

Ms. Balmir stated that she was satisfied with the concept that if a project doesn't cross an interchange and it doesn't connect a node that it can be considered an auxiliary lane. She stated that if a project cannot be modeled, it should not be considered capacity enhancing. If future versions of the model are sensitive enough to reflect these projects, then we can revisit this issue.

The group clarified that the intent of this discussion was to agree on a definition of projects that are not regionally significant as opposed to adding a project category to the list of projects exempt from conformity. The benefit of a project considered not regionally significant is that it can be added to the RTIP without a new regional emissions analysis.

Ms. Mazur concluded that the any guidance developed by the TCWG on this subject needs to be put in writing and included in SCAG's conformity procedures.

Chair Bergener stated that once the TCWG had the opportunity to review the examples that Ms. Mazur has compiled the item should be revisited.

## **6.2 Project Level PM Hotspots Analyses Discussion**

Chairman Bergener initiated a discussion to consider how we might define "significant" as used throughout the rule requiring project-level PM hot spot analyses.

Ms. Mazur stated that Caltrans, EPA, and FHWA have discussed the subject and felt that it needs to be defined locally (i.e., by MPO or non-attainment area), so that the TCWG can decide what is significant in our area. Mr. Mike Brady, Caltrans, stated that we should use the benchmarks set forth in the rule guidance (e.g., greater than 125,000 annual average daily truck with 8% or more diesel truck) as a starting point. It was agreed that the TCWG should come up with a standard working definition so project proponents are clear on the requirements.

Ms. Julia Lester, Environ International Corp., stated that clarifying what local means (MPO vs. air basin) is essential so project proponents are clear which agency to be talking with to receive guidance on the analysis methodology.

The group discussed the role of the MPO relative to interagency consultation. As part of this discussion, Mr. Brady indicated that a streamlined method for interagency consultation and public involvement is critical since FHA requires these procedures for every project that is not explicitly exempt from the hot spot analysis requirement.

Ms. Carla Walecka, TCA, stated that a draft of the working definition needs to be created by staff and reviewed at a subsequent meeting of the TCWG, otherwise projects are going to be processed without going through interagency consultation or staff will be getting a lot of phone calls on the subject.

Mr. Sherwood suggested that since no other agency has addressed the issue in California and since it will affect other areas of the State, Mr. Brady may be in the best position to draft a beginning discussion piece to be brought before the Statewide Conformity Working Group. Mr. Brady responded that he has been considering how to develop a "consent agenda" type process. He also stated that this issue predominantly affects SCAG and San Joaquin Valley, so he will likely have to work it out with each area.

Ms. Mazur suggested that there be a sub-group to work with Mr. Brady to draft the definition and guidelines. Additionally, it would be helpful to include someone who is actually involved in the project development process. Ms. Lester also suggested including air agencies in these discussions since there are technical issues of concern to the air agencies in addition to the procedural issues being discussed here.

Mr. Brady agreed to coordinate a conference call with SCAG, volunteer members of the TCWG committee, and the air quality agencies for all of the PM areas (both PM10 and PM2.5 areas). Representatives from FHWA, EPA, Caltrans, SCAQMD, and SCAG all volunteered to participate, and Mr. Brady indicated he would use the Statewide Conformity Working Group list to seek additional volunteers.

### **6.3 Socioeconomic Input to Air Plans**

Frank Wen, SCAG, stated that Baseline Forecasts used in the modeling and activity data for the 2007 AQMP are based primarily on the adopted 2004 RTP Growth Forecast with adjustments reflecting current demographic and economic trends, latest land use changes, newly approved regionally significant projects, general plan or specific plan update, and/or zoning revisions. The forecast reflects the local perspective is in terms of jurisdiction growth and other inputs to the RTP.

Mr. Wen also discussed the process for developing the draft 2007/2008 RTP Preferred Growth Forecast, including taking comments and input from the Planning and Policy Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the sub-regions and local jurisdictions, various other stakeholders, as well as a panel of experts. The draft Preferred Growth Forecast would need to be completed by the beginning of next year to meet the December 2007 schedule of the next RTP.

A question was raised as to how SCAG's Compass "growth visioning" strategy is addressed. SCAG's Compass program is reflected in the socioeconomic data for the RTP. Regional policies such as Compass are not assumed for the "No Project" ("Baseline") scenario, which just reflects projected trends. The difference between the RTP and the baseline reflects the benefit of the plan (e.g., congestion relief, air quality, etc.).

Ms. Mazur questioned whether SCAG has evaluated changes that have occurred because of Compass or changes that need to occur in terms of Compass projections versus what is in the regions' general plans. Mr. Wen stated that there are a number of demonstration projects and data from a number of years of experience which will be brought into the baseline growth forecast. Ms. Mazur indicated that she expects to see something in SCAG's conformity documentation as to why the assumptions would be reasonable for conformity purposes.

Ms. Mazur related past experience with MTC in the Bay Area. Though for conformity purposes growth trends are typically used, the Bay Area is using growth visioning. Therefore, MTC had to monitor progress to show assumptions are still reasonable. While in the Bay Area some General Plans needed to be revised to accommodate higher densities, Ted Harris of SCAG had previously indicated that General Plans in the SCAG region can accommodate the higher densities. Ms. O'Connor added that it is important to know not only that there are cities accommodating growth visioning assumptions through zoning, but that there are projects actually going forward.

Mr. Nadler asked whether FHWA had a guidance protocol that was provided to MTC. Ms. Mazur stated that they worked with MTC in terms of what information would be needed to show progress and that this information was valuable to MTC so it became a collaborative effort. Ms. Mazur envisions a similar process for working with SCAG. Ted Matley added that while there are some basic information needs, we would need a tailor made monitoring plan for SCAG and is willing to sit down with SCAG to discuss this item.

### **6.4 TCM Update**

Chair Bergener recommended that the committee review the draft list of all the TCM's included in the agenda package (excluding L.A. County). Chair Bergener strongly encouraged all the agencies to look through the list and provide any comments to Jessica Kirchner, SCAG, as soon as possible.

Chair Bergener, questioned as to why a pedestrian bridge over Imperial Highway in Yorba Linda was listed as a TCM. After discussion, the committee concluded that this was a safety measure and did not meet the definition of a TCM. The committee agreed to remove the item from the list.

It was noted that any items listed as 'deleted (adopted)' in the Project Status column should be removed from the list entirely. It was also noted that the compiling of the L.A. County TCM list was in progress and would be included in the agenda packet next month.

It was also noted that the TCM-2002171, OMNITRANS, para-transit van expansion, was not being funded/purchased. It will be deleted out of the RTIP and the TCWG will discuss at the next meeting if there will be need for substitution.

The committee agreed to continue the discussion on refining the definition of TCMs.

Inquiry was made as to the status of the TCM substitutions that were pending U.S. EPA approval for the TCM substitutions. Ms. Karina O'Connor, EPA, responded that the EPA had been told that the delegation to the regions will happen within the next four weeks. The EPA has the documentation ready so when the delegation of authority happens the agency can move forward with the letter. EPA is planning to get concurrence on all three substitutions at the same time in one letter.

#### **6.5 2007 AQMP Update**

Ms. Carla Welecka, TCA, gave an AQMP update based on her attendance at the April AQMP Advisory meeting. SCAQMD staff presented an air quality update with information on the latest 2002 and 2005 data for the criteria pollutants. Staff also presented a preliminary PM2.5 analysis reflecting where the highest PM2.5 levels are in the region. Emissions inventory update efforts were discussed, including base year inventories, SCAG growth forecasts, and potential further adjustments. There was an update regarding control measure scoping sessions that the South Coast District has been carrying out with other agencies (mainly ARB), including emission reduction needs, initial concepts, and long-term measures. It was announced that there will be an Air Quality Summit, tentatively scheduled for the first week in June, to talk about potential measures for the AQMP and seek further input from experts and the public. As part of the discussion, the SCAQMD indicated that there is consideration to request a bump-up to a more serious non-attainment status in order to have the ability to use black box type measures. SCAQMD staff also provided a brief update on the efforts to develop and validate meteorological/air quality modeling episodes.

#### **6.6 Information Sharing**

Jonathan Nadler, SCAG, stated that Ms. Mazur had sent him an e-mail with follow-up on previous discussions on planning and air quality requirements for environmental document approval for the RTIP which he would forward to the committee.

### **7.0 ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 A.M.

The next meeting of the TCWG will be on Tuesday, May 23, 2006 at SCAG.